Class Visits for Sessional Staff

The Rationale

Class Visiting is a Quality Assurance & Enhancement process designed to offer peer-observation to all Sessional Staff teaching at Birkbeck.

Class Visiting is employed as a cross-provisional peer-mentoring measure; in 2008-9 130+ classes taught by Sessional Lecturers were visited across all subjects. The system offers the opportunity to appraise:

- Facilities of venue/teaching accommodation
- Curriculum content/quality
- Organisation of class
- Communication/teaching methods

The visit and report format are both designed to encourage positive and constructive feedback, though areas of development or action points may be highlighted. The purpose of the visiting process is to offer support and reassurance to new lecturers, as well as guidance where appropriate. Lecturers’ opinions on the process are sought through an evaluation form which is included in their visit documents.

The Process Proposal

Please note, parts of the process outlined below are temporary, and will be replaced by use of the semi-automated GURU Class Visits system, which will soon be implemented. The new system will greatly simplify the logging and creation/distribution of class visit materials.

Before the academic year commences, a School-based administrator (either the Assistant School Manager for Learning & Teaching or departmental Team Leader) should be nominated to undertake the following procedure:

1  At the beginning of the Academic year the nominated administrator checks the subject provision and highlights occurrences of modules requiring visits, according to the following criteria:

- All Lecturers to be visited once every 3 years
- New Lecturers to be visited in their first year
- Lecturers teaching a new module, or one new to them, should be visited

The administrator adds the course and class visit details to the Class Visit Planning Template document, inclusive of selecting a preferred class visitor and contacting them in advance to ensure they are able to undertake the visit.

2  On a regular basis throughout the year the administrator activates the electronic mailout system on the Guru Class Visits page, which emails standard documents to the Class Visitor and Lecturer to be visited. The site automatically records the delivery date of these documents:

Visitors receive:

- Cover letter including visit details
- Visit report form template
- Visit guidelines
- Course outline
- Claim form (if part time)

Lecturers receive:

- Cover letter including visit details
3 The Lecturer confirms receipt of the visit details with the administrator.

4 Once the visit is carried out (and no later than 2 weeks thereafter) the Visitor’s report should be returned to the school administrator. Receipt of the report must be confirmed on the GURU system.

5 The Visit Report, Visitor claim forms and Lecturer self-assessment forms should be returned to the nominated school administrator.

6 Action to be taken as a result of a class visit report should be noted in the Annual Subject Report.

### Class Visits Process / Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[NOMINATED ADMINISTRATOR] CHECKS / AMENDS CLASSES TO BE VISITED IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR</td>
<td>Beginning of Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[NOMINATED ADMINISTRATOR] AUTHORISES DOCUMENT EMAIL TO LECTURER AND VISITOR, GURU RECORDS DATE AND TIME OF SENDOUT</td>
<td>4 Weeks prior to Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISITORS AND LECTURERS CONFIRM RECEIPT OF DOCUMENTS</td>
<td>2 Weeks prior to Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS VISIT TAKES PLACE AND REPORT FORM IS FILLED OUT BY VISITOR. LECTURER MAY FILL OUT SELF ASSESSMENT FORM</td>
<td>Visit Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VISIT REPORT AND FEE CLAIM FORM RETURNED TO [NOMINATED ADMINISTRATOR]</td>
<td>2 Weeks after Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATED ADMINISTRATOR PROCESSES CLAIM FORM AND GIVES COPY OF VISIT REPORT TO [SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR / AWARD COORDINATOR] FOR ANY REQUIRED FOLLOW-UP ACTION</td>
<td>2/3 Weeks after Visit</td>
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</tbody>
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James Bell  
QA and Partnerships Officer, Registry  
18th August 2009